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Falls Church City-Related

Falls Church Begins Its Own Bus Service

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The City of Falls Church and Metro will launch the city's first intracity bus service Dec. 15, transit officials said. Both Fairfax County and Fairfax city operate similar local routes.

The 25-cents-a-trip service will be called GEORGE, after George Washington. He was a parishioner at the Falls Church, from which the city got its name.

Metrobus currently serves Falls Church, stopping along major roads such as Broad Street (Route 7). GEORGE will also stop along smaller neighborhood streets and will take passengers to the East and West Falls Church Metro stations. One of its three routes will run between the two stations on weekends and during non-rush hours.

Bus rides will be free during the first few weeks of service, leading up to an official kickoff Jan. 10. Beginning Jan. 11, the base fare will be 25 cents. Metrobus and other local bus transfers will be valid for the base fare, but rail transfers will not be accepted.

Riders will be able to use Metro's SmarTrip cards on the GEORGE buses.

GEORGE will run from 6 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays and from 6 a.m. to 12:30 a.m. Fridays. Weekend service will be from 8 a.m. to 12:30 a.m. Saturdays and from 10 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Sundays.

Falls Church will be a pilot city for a new, cleaner, diesel fuel technology. The transit system will use four 30-foot-long buses with high-tech exhaust gas recirculation systems in conjunction with advanced diesel particulate filters. Transit officials said the buses are expected to emit 50 percent less nitrous oxide, up to 90 percent fewer hydrocarbons and 90 percent less particulate matter than conventional diesel buses.

The city, in partnership with Metro and the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission, began its original pilot program to implement an environmentally friendly transportation service in 1996. The city bought a single hybrid-electric bus, which uses an electric motor in conjunction with its regular fossil fuel-burning engine.

Authorities hoped the bus service eventually would use a fleet of such vehicles. However, mechanical problems forced officials to purchase the more reliable diesel buses. The hybrid bus will remain in the fleet as a backup.

The Jan. 10 celebration will run from 10 a.m. to noon at the Falls Church Community Center, 223 Little Falls St. Residents can see the buses and learn about the bus system at these times and places:

- 7-7:30 p.m. Monday, City Council meeting, City Hall parking lot, 300 Park Ave. 703-248-5003.
- 10-11 a.m. Tuesday, Falls Church Community Center, 223 Little Falls St. 703-248-5077.
- 5:30-6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Mary Riley Styles Public Library, 120 N. Virginia Ave. 703-248-5030.
- 8-9 a.m. Dec. 16, property yard, 7100 Gordon Rd. 703-248-5089.
- 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Dec. 17, Greater Falls Church Chamber of Commerce luncheon, Italian Cafe, 7161 Lee Hwy. 703-241-1829; 703-532-1050.

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